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Nothing simple in slaying of Aurora man

By John P. Coyne

A few years ago, several friends and co-workers of George M. Perry were having lunch when one commented, "George spends so much time in foreign countries, he must be involved with the CIA."

At the time, the men laughed at the thought of his being involved in some cloak-and-dagger activity. Over the past three weeks though, many of Perry's friends and associates have wondered whether there was a part of Perry's life no one knew.

"He was a very patriotic man who was far above your average businessman," said Susan D. Vieth, a family friend and neighbor in the exclusive country club setting of Walden in Aurora.

"George was a superpatriot," said her husband, Warren K. Vieth. "He was John Wayne with a Czech accent."

Although the Vieths and other acquaintances of Perry expressed skepticism that he was involved with the Central Intelligence Agency, Perry's mysterious disappearance Jan. 8 and the discovery three months later of his body in a lake 45 miles north of New York City leave many questions unanswered.

"Clearly, it was not a simple robbery-murder," said Joseph P. Brown, Orange County, N.Y., district attorney who is supervising the investigation. He said Perry had been shot at close range three times in the head with a .22-caliber gun and weights were attached to his legs before he was dumped into the lake.

"Whoever committed the crime did not want the body found for a long time, possibly never," he said.

Perry had told his family he planned to fly to Zurich, Switzerland, on Sunday, Jan. 9, but because he had left his pass-

port at the Brazilian consulate in New York to renew his visa, he was unable to leave that day and canceled his reservation.

His youngest son, James C. Perry, 22, said his father did not seem upset about anything and sounded in good spirits when the two last talked Jan. 7.

Brown said Perry made several phone calls on Jan. 8, but there the trail ends.

His luggage, credit cards and personal papers have disappeared, but \$2,000 in American and Brazilian money belonging to Perry was found in a hotel safe.

Investigators believe Perry might have been murdered on Jan. 8 and his belongings removed from his room. He had reserved the room through Jan. 10, police said.

Brown said there was no evidence to indicate that Perry was involved in any intelligence work that might have resulted in his death. Yet, the 12 investigators tracing Perry's last days have not yet found another motive for the murder, the district attorney said.

A spokesman for the CIA who was familiar with the Perry murder refused to say whether Perry was involved in any work for the agency. "We don't discuss allegations of CIA employment or any contact with the agency," the spokesman said.

Several former CIA employees contacted by The Plain Dealer, however, said a person with Perry's background and knowledge would be considered an ideal source person for the agency.

"I think he had all the attributes that would be ascribed to an agent," said a former information analyzer for the agency. "Businessmen can be good sources of information. He had a lot of good contacts in foreign countries, could travel extensively without raising suspicion and spoke several languages."

Family members said Perry occasionally mentioned being questioned by the CIA, especially after he returned from Iron Curtain countries.

"He was frustrated by the worry that his name might get out under some Freedom of Information inquiry," one of his sons said. "He thought that would ruin his credibility as a business person."

Richard H. Giza, a staff member on the House subcommittee which oversees CIA operations, said the agency has a Domestic Contact Division which routinely seeks the views of American businessmen who travel to foreign countries. He said the information sought is mostly the businessman's impressions of economic and political conditions in the countries visited.

As former general manager of the Terex Division of General Motors Corp., Perry was responsible for the operation of five Terex plants in North America, Brazil and Scotland. Associates said he spent considerable time overseas selling earth-moving equipment to foreign governments and businesses.

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